

## GUIDELINES FOR LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



When students apply to undergraduate and graduate programs in America, the application process usually includes at least two recommendation letters from teachers or professors who can honestly evaluate the student's academic ability and potential as a scholar. These count quite heavily towards making the decision on whether or not to accept the student so it is important that you provide the admissions committee with the kind of information that is most helpful. Your American colleagues are relying on your judgment and expertise to help them make the right decision.

### Keep in Mind:

- It is okay to ask students what they would like you to emphasize in the recommendation
- Be wary of giving copies of your letter to students. The copies may turn up in places you did not expect.
- If you have no objections, please provide your contact details for follow up.
- Only agree to write a recommendation if you can write a positive one. It is best to be honest with the student if what you have to say could hurt their chances. Tell the student to ask someone else.
- Find out what the student's specific goals are before you begin writing.
- You want to emphasize the aspects of their personality and academic performance that relate to that goal.

### The letter should include:

- Your status at the school, job title, how long you have known the student and in what capacity (teacher, adviser, coach etc)
- The better you know the student, the more effective your recommendation will be. Colleges want specifics not generalizations. It is good to say that someone is hard working and organized but you need to substantiate these statements with concrete examples. "Tsia is a hard working student. His science project on inventing an alternative rocket fuel was an impressive demonstration of his ability to apply statistics and analyze data that is way above his current school grade level."
- Talk about what the student has done and is capable of doing. What is it exactly about the student that makes him special? Why do you think this student would benefit from studying in the US?
- Evaluate the student by comparing him with other students you have observed in your work. The following is a suggestion of the categories you may wish to use for comparison. You can use phrases such as excellent, very good, good, average or below average.

1. Intellectual ability – assessment of written and oral work
2. Teaching potential
3. Knowledge of field
4. Resourcefulness and initiative – examples of how student problem solves
5. Work Habits
6. Motivation to pursue u/grad studies/passion
7. Seriousness of Purpose
8. Potential for future contribution in field
9. Emotional maturity – how student relates to others – peers' opinion – group work
10. Adaptability to new situations
11. Observable Leadership abilities - humane qualities that make a difference
12. Anything that would indicate potential for success on an American Campus, or Comparison with similar students who have been successful at overseas Universities (if applicable)